

An Essay  
on  
The qualifications and duties of the physician,  
Respectfully submitted to the Faculty  
of  
The Homoeopathic Medical College  
of  
Pennsylvania.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> day  
of  
January  
Eighteen Hundred and fifty four  
by  
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Pa.

While the savage roams from infancy to decrepid age amid nature's scenery, discovering but little of the beauty and simplicity of her laws; - the man of science beholds in her vast laboratory, objects of endless variety and surpassing grandeur, and as this jewelled index of genius points to the glorious pages of Infinite wisdom and Almighty power, as presented in the bright volume of Creation, he discovers the immutable order, and admirable harmony of her laws. So the physician - the true minister of nature - must invoke the aid of science in his investigations of the laws of life and health, entering upon, and prosecuting his work with all the devotion of the Hebrew and zeal of the Greek. And here let it be understood, that virtue and science should go hand in hand; while the one is to be kept constantly in view, the

other is never to be overlooked. *Mores aenigi conci-  
entia sana, et nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.* One com-  
missioned to the ministry of an art claiming to  
control in all its length and breadth the mys-  
terious phenomena of life, by removing the  
infirmities of the body, must be familiar with  
its organization - complete master of the minu-  
test and most abstrus points of Anatomy and  
Physiology in health, and Pathology in disease.  
The medicinal and remedial agents which he em-  
ploys, are gathered from the material world around  
him, hence an intimate companionship  
with Chemistry is required: and while Geol-  
ogy and Mineralogy, at his solicitation yield  
their stores, his mind should be perfumed with  
the rich treasures which Botany reveals. Nor is  
he to investigate the material world alone.  
This occupation leads him into ceaseless

contact with the immortal part of the universe. The body is not the only object of his care. Mind and matter are too intimately and mysteriously commingled to be successfully studied, or treated apart. Intellectual Philosophy here forms a link in the golden chain of science, enabling him while ministering to a "mind diseased", to become more or less conversant with its workings. The laws of Physics are important and ought to be investigated; revealing as they do, the phenomena of light and caloric, electricity and magnetism, as well as cosmical influences constantly acting, in air, on land and sea, require familiarity with their varied operations. Etiology, pointing to the causes of disease, will introduce him to their effect- disease itself - Semeiology, will present the phenomena of disease - Nosology, the

division and classification - Diagnosis, their distinction - Therapeutics, their treatment - Prognosis, their result, and Prophylaxis and Eugenics, their prevention. And finally in this field may be noticed, last in order, but first in importance the *Materia Medica*. The importance of a thorough knowledge of this branch is incommensurate, and so indispensable is it that all available facts in this department, be at his disposal and ready at his bidding, that without them he is at best but groping in darkness and wavering in doubt. I know the task is an Herculean one, but it can - it must be accomplished. *Nihil sine magno vita labore delit mortalibus.* A knowledge of this, like that of any other department of science, is only purchased at the expense of persevering labor and patient toil. To use the language of an other, *All his*

other acquirements are but the amusements of a leisure hour, to the steady, toilsome acquisition of this indispensable knowledge! But without it, he is nothing. In the chambers of his memory must be suspended, side by side, in some true, convenient order, the historical pictures descriptive of his drugs, and here he must bring his tablets of disease for comparison."

It is not sufficient then, that the physician be wrapped in embossed envelopes of scientific nomenclature, indorsed with classic technicalities, and stamped with that dogmatical air of assurance so characteristic of the novice, skilled only in that index learning,

"Which turns no student pale;"  
but no branch of useful knowledge should be to him a sealed book. He should keep pace with the progressive march of modern

discoveries and improvements, while no opportunity to collect, examine and compare the theories of the learned should pass unimproved - not to be treasured up as mere imagery to adorn the mind or please the fancy, but that he may turn them to "some good account" - call into play all the better functions of mind, and at the same time contribute something to the intellectual elevation of the profession: - and thus the Medical art, instead of lingering in the rear of science, may lead the van - lay claim to this legitimate child of her household - pluck the flowers of perennial bloom and unrivalled beauty that lay at her feet, and win for herself the laurels, which in her long years of loitering fame has justly placed upon the brows of others - not that I would have him luxuriate in the

exuberance of knowledge to the exclusion of others, or by lowering that which is truly exalted, but by elevating that which is unduly depressed. But I must pause. It would neither comport with the proposed design, nor prescribed limits of this paper, to dwell longer upon the intellectual abilities, mental culture, literary attainments and scientific investigations, which are the beacons that are to light his path through the tempest tossed ocean of human suffering, on which he has launched his noble bark and spread his hopeful sail. Admitting his qualifications in these respects to be all that could be reasonably expected, or even possibly desired, and yet, without conscience for his compass, and virtue for his chart, without an abiding sense of duty towards his patients and a heart devoted to his calling, he will fail -

wofully fail in accomplishing the great objects of his voyage. His bark, although it have a ballast of gold and a sentinel of faithful friends, will suffer shipwreck on the shoals of disgrace, or be stranded upon the quicksands of reproach, ere he has fairly cleared his mornings, or his canvas has been inflated by the auspicious breath of gratitude, emanating from the warm hearts of those who might have been relieved, from bodily pain or mental depression by his benevolence & skill. In the practice of medicine, there is much that is truly sublime. He who enters upon it should possess a head to conceive, a heart to resolve, and a hand to execute every good work- being largely endued with the spirit of Him, "Who healed all manner of diseases," and whose incarnate existence and triumphant career, is beautifully expressed by an inspired

penman in the simple and unadorned  
phrase, "He went about doing good." The phy-  
sician's sphere is a religious one; and all his  
motives and actions should be so regulated by  
the claims of conscience - by the incommensurate  
and unavoidable responsibilities resting upon him  
as an intelligent and accountable being, that  
when submitted to the rigid analytical cruci-  
cible of public sentiment, and the uncomprom-  
ising test of truth, the fine gold of virtue  
will be the uniform result. A pursuit invol-  
ving so many claims as that of medicine, de-  
mands of him who follows it, an aptitude to  
inspire confidence - hence the physician  
should be courteous without affectation -  
cheerful without levity - sympathizing and  
cordial - strictly punctual - rigidly temper-  
ate - characterized by sterling integrity.

unwearied patience, undaunted courage and  
self-denying toil - calm deliberation and yet  
prompt and decided action - in a word, he  
should possess all the moral sentiments and  
manly virtues of a mind which worships at  
no earthly shrine but that of Truth: and so  
essential a part of his qualifications are  
these, that where wanting, - A medical license  
to practice is but little better than a legal  
license to destroy."

The physician's relation  
to the public is not only a responsible, but  
also a peculiar one! He is, in a less limited  
sense than might at first appear, the man  
of the people; and public opinion is of the  
same importance to him, that the rise &  
fall of stocks are to the speculator - that  
the state of the market is to the merchant,

or the spirit of the age to the philosopher. He should not therefore be unmindful of the employment of the proper means necessary to win for himself a reputation. In a professional point of view, the principal duties of the physician are to relieve suffering, prolong life, and in a prompt, mild and permanent manner to restore health to the sick. The greater his opportunities, the more certain and complete will be the attainment of his object and the greater benefactor will he be of his race. Inasmuch as his usefulness depends, *ceteris paribus*, upon the good opinion of the community in which he resides, it devolves upon him, not merely as a permissive right, but as an imperative duty, to make all laudable efforts to secure the confidence of those to whom his

professional services are tendered. It is true, that extraordinary abilities and striking success may sometimes, as it were, force public sentiment and the reckless and unprincipled practitioner may rise, in spite of general dislike; but instances of this kind are rare, and serve only to verify the oft-repeated aphorism, *Exceptio probat regulam*. The young physician has gradually to rise in public estimation on his own intrinsic merits, and thus, without courting patronage by the vulgar baits of ambition, pride, or charlatanism, the afflicted will be encouraged to commit to his judgement and skill their greatest earthly blessing, life and health. How important then, that all his actions be so regulated that the highest objects of his vocation may be attained as far as possible. *Finis coronat opus.*

A due regard to external appearances will at once be appreciated, and should be in keeping with the dignity of his station and character of his mission. Extravagance ought carefully to be avoided on the one hand and parsimony on the other.

Having briefly alluded to the relations which the physician sustains to the public, I now propose to notice, with equal brevity, his relations to the sick. And first he should regard man only as man—as a fellow being—as a spirit whose corporeal individuality is but a decaying garment. As a physician his duties are superinduced. He is to recognize no privileged class—make no distinction between the affluent and indigent—the high or low.

He who is in the most imminent danger and greatest suffering, needs most, and above all others has a right to demand his services. Dives and Lazarus have like claims upon his kindest attention and most unrewarded faithfulness. He is to go forth, following the example of the Great Physician, who while on earth made the homes of the sick, the desolate, and the sorrowful the abodes of joy and gladness. It matters not whether the sufferer be stretch'd upon a couch of cedar-down, curtained with satin and fringed with gold, while every thing around him is indicative of the smiling presence of luxury and ease: or whether he be call'd to minister to one groaning upon an uninviting pallet of straw, surrounded but by privation and

want. He know not the richest and most enduring reward of his calling, who appreciates his patients according to the smiles or frowns of fortune. Though the physician may move unawed amid "The pestilence that walketh in darkness and wasteth as noonday" the rich man will sometimes imagine that ~~that~~ by the grudging payment of a fee he has redeemed all obligations of thankfulness, unconscious that it receives its greater value through a deeper and nobler feeling, aside from which the physician's attention and skill - his anxiety and watchfulness, are ranged with and prized only as the laborer's daily toil - an equivalent for his services being rendered in Dollars and cents. He is to forget all minor interests - all human distinctions.

Hopes of affluence and pleasure may neither  
dance before the poor, in their midnight  
dreams nor mingle with their daily toils—  
there may be none to linger at their bier  
or drop a tear of sorrow on their graves—  
and yet their lives have the same inherent  
value, and death is the same ineffable  
evil. Let me not be misunderstood here.  
I do not say that all lives are equally  
valuable: but I assume as an axiom, and  
therefore need no argument to prove, that  
in any and all cases, life derives its highest  
value from the vital principle itself; and not  
from any adventitious, or concomitant  
circumstances or distinctions connected with it.  
These are as varied and changeable as the  
hues of the chameleon—they are as diversified  
as the features, the talents, the influences,

the employments, the conditions and relations of men: they add to, or diminish the relative importance of different lives; but cannot affect the intrinsic value affixed to life itself - that vital spark which embosoms all of earth, and is held as a common possession. He, who dispenses his remedial agents to the poor in sickness, regardless of pecuniary reward, will appear to them like an angel of consolation and as the midnight of despair which for a time hung over his patient, gently gives place to the bright morning of hope. The practitioner himself realizes the truth of the declaration, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The physician, who views his profession as a strictly religious one - or in other words as a calling regulated by

the claims of conscience and not by the amount of profit, need not fear being chilled by the everlasting snows of want. The rich will feel - the poor will bless - and all will recognize in a benefactor.

The balances of life and death are sometimes so evenly adjusted, that the honest penetration and most mature judgement cannot determine, which will finally preponderate. It is the physician's duty under such circumstances to inform the patient's friends of the impending danger. As the fear of death adds materially to the danger, and in a majority of instances diminishes the prospects of recovery, the probability of a fatal issue should be communicated to the patient, only under peculiar circumstances. Although the Deity has

wisely reserved to himself the supreme control of life and death, he has also made it obligatory upon us to employ to the best of our abilities, the means which he has placed at our disposal, to preserve the one and avert the other: and hence the physician is bound alike by every precept of duty and tie of humanity, to cling to his patient, and even in the last extremity he should not forsake them - he may still be a solace, and when he cannot save life, he may alleviate suffering and thus smooth the bed of death. The relations which the physician sustains to his patients renders secrecy an indispensable element of his character. As a true minister of nature, he is called upon to worship at her most sacred shrine - no impure thoughts, <sup>should</sup> encroach

upon the precincts of her sanctity - no profane gift sacrificed upon her altar! He is bound by a thousand ties to keep the most absolute silence in regard to the secrets of every household. Not only the happiness of individuals but often of whole families, lies at his discretion, and to betray or abuse the confidence of his patients, would be to ignore that elevation and purity of principles, which should form a never changing exponent of his character. It was my purpose to have said something of the physician's relations to his colleagues and to the profession, but conscious of having already taxed your patience full long, I am admonished to waive this design. Deeply impressed with the high moral responsibilities

resting upon him who deals with the  
happiness, the health, and life of man-  
kind, I could not say less - I need not  
say more. -

It was doubtless expected that  
this dissertation would have some bearing  
on Homoeopathy; but of it I need say  
nothing. It speaks for itself in language  
more forcible than any which the most  
finished rhetoric can express, - in argu-  
ments more convincing than any which the  
most cogent reasoning can adduce.  
It has gone forth like the angel of the  
Evangelist "conquering and to conquer" -  
it is marshaling its hosts in every clime.  
It is kindling its beacon fires in our  
valleys and proclaiming through its  
trump its redemptive mission to

suffering humanity upon our mountain tops. The gentle means which it employs are engines, in skillful hands, more potent in storming disease, than were the ancient catapults of the Greeks or the batteringrams of the Romans in besieging a city: and the attempt to stay its progress or confine its limits, would be as unsuccessful as would be the effort to weave a web of midnight darkness from the effulgent beams of the meridian sun.

May our Alma Mater, the first, the brightest, and purest source of Homoeopathic instruction sanctioned by chartered privileges, increase the boundaries of her already widely extended influence and far famed reputation: Dispensing the

richness of her blessings by the clear and  
steady light of her talismanic wand.  
Similia similibus curantur; presenting a septan-  
gular front, untarnished by any compro-  
mise with Allopathy, Hydropathy or  
Eclecticism. And may it be written of  
her Alumni, faithful and true, - their  
motto be - onward and upward - their  
watchword - explore.